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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 8461  
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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2007

#### In Today's Papers

Prime Minister Erdogan: US, a Strategic Ally, Obliged to Act with Us

All papers report that on Thursday, Prime Minister Erdogan, on a state visit to Romania, said in a news conference in Bucharest that the decision on a cross-border incursion into northern Iraq will be made by Ankara regardless of the reaction from Washington. "As our strategic ally, America is obliged to act with us. We acted together with them in Afghanistan," Erdogan emphasized. Erdogan also rejected allegations that the aim of his upcoming US visit would be to secure clearance from Washington for a cross-border operation into Iraq's north. Papers see the PM's remarks as a harsh response to Secretary Rice who had warned Turkey to abstain from intervention in northern Iraq.

Papers comment that recent statements by US officials, seen as stalling tactics, aim to keep Turkey away from northern Iraq. Remarks coming from high level Americans including secretaries Rice and Gates are vague, according to several papers, and aim to keep any possible Turkish operations limited in scope. Liberal Radikal draws attention to reports in the foreign press pointing to "ties" between the PKK militants and the US military, saying the US cannot be trusted in fighting against the PKK.

#### Ongoing Turkish Operations In and Out of Northern Iraq

All papers report the Turkish General Staff (TGS) confirmed Thursday that at least 30 of some 100 PKK militants were killed during an attack on a gendarmerie post in Semdinli in the Hakkari province on the border with Iraq. Papers report operations backed by planes and helicopters continue. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet claims Turkish fighter jets taking off from Diyarbakir air base bombed the PKK positions in northern Iraq whereas the Islamist-oriented Zaman claims the planes only made reconnaissance flights along the border and in Iraq. Papers report over 1,000 special security forces were deployed to the region, and landmine sweeping continued on the border.

**Editorial Commentary on Turkish Iraq Incursion, US-Turkey**  
Mehmet Tezkan comments in the mainstream daily Vatan: "The US is obviously stalling Turkey on the PKK issue. We only see statements from US officials and no concrete action. One wonders if this is part of an American revenge-taking policy for Turkey's refusal to allow US forces to enter Iraq in 2003. The man on the street is very much in the mood to follow the Israeli example and hit the targets in Northern Iraq without listening to anybody anymore. PM Erdogan faces a very big challenge if he goes ahead with a comprehensive cross-border operation which includes the risk of the collapse of financial markets and a heavy blow to tourism. In any case, if the PKK continues to carry out its attacks, the public reaction may be uncontrollable. The hard part of this story is that there is no clear formula to overcome the crisis. Both options -- carrying out a cross-border operation or not -- come with many problems attached."

Taha Akyol observed in the mainstream daily Milliyet (10/26): "It will be a long list if we try to list all the harms Turkey has faced as a result of US actions. The Gulf War during the elder Bush's era and the Iraq War during George Bush's era are quite enough. Turkey, due to these two events, not only suffered financially but also lost many lives because of terrorism and faced threats to its territorial integrity. I'm not saying that the US administration shaped its strategy to harm Turkey deliberately but it is also valid to ask if the US should continue to pursue strategies which completely undermine its ally's vital interests. Today it is very obvious that Barzani has put terrorism before Turkey because he feels encouraged due to US policies. This is the point of no return. Turkey faces terrorism and does not find its friend on its side. The US must prove its friendship through deeds not for Turkey's sake but because of our bilateral strategic interests and for the stability of this

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region."

**Iraqi High-Level Delegation in Ankara for PKK Talks**  
All papers report that following the recent meetings of Foreign Minister Ali Babacan in Baghdad earlier this week, a high-level Iraqi delegation arrived in Ankara yesterday evening to discuss steps to eliminate the PKK's presence in the north of Iraq. The Iraqi delegation will kick off talks Friday. The delegation includes the Iraqi Minister for National Security Sherwan al-Waili, Defense Minister Abd al-Qadir al-Mufriji, intelligence chief al-Faisal, KDP foreign relations chief Safin Dizayi, PUK representative Imad Ahmad, and Interior Ministry U/S Aydin Halit. Some papers claim the Turkish General Staff (TGS) has objected to the two Kurdish representatives in the delegation participating in the meeting between TGS and the Iraqis today. The Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) sources told papers Turkey attaches importance to this visit, warning it may be a "last chance" for Iraq.

**Cigarettes Smuggled into Turkey Provide Financial Support to the PKK**

Liberal Radikal and leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet report that according to the report published by the Smuggling and Organized Crime Bureau of the Security department around \$2.5 billion worth of cigarettes are smuggled into Turkey every year. Reportedly, cigarettes are produced in a factory in Dohuk and passed to the Barzani family's company to be distributed to the smugglers internally. Cigarettes are smuggled into Turkey on donkeys and in groups of 10-15 people. Before crossing the border, smugglers are forced to bribe the PKK militants at the border.

**An American University in Istanbul Allows the Headscarf**  
Cumhuriyet reports that at the opening of New York's Alfred University Istanbul campus the majority of the students and parents were wearing the Islamic-style headscarf. Some of the students complained that most of the teachers are wearing headscarves during classes and talking about religion and that there are even students attending the classes wearing a veil or full chador. Students expressed their disappointment saying that they were expecting a US-style university.

**TV Highlights**

NTV, 7.00 A.M.

#### Domestic News

- The Council of State (Danistay) has annulled the radio and television watchdog RTUK's imposition of a news blackout regarding the PKK attacks that killed 12 Turkish soldiers in Hakkari over the weekend. Government spokesman Cemil Cicek said the government will respect the Danistay decision.

- Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis, attending the Black Sea Economic Cooperation talks in Ankara, said the PKK presence in northern Iraq was a serious problem that should be solved through dialogue with the Iraqi government.

- The Turkish General Staff (TGS) has released a message to express its gratitude for the support extended by the Turkish public, civic and professional organizations to the Turkish military after the terrorist attacks which killed 12 soldiers in Hakkari.

- Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP is to hold an extraordinary party congress on November 8. Ahmet Turk said he will not run for the party leadership. Firat Anli, the mayor of Yenisehir district in Diyarbakir, is expected to be nominated for the post.

#### International News

- Jamal Abdallah, spokesman of the Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq, has denied reports that there were any PKK offices in

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the region, dismissing Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's order to shut down the offices of the organization.

- US Ambassador Ryan Crocker told reporters in Baghdad that the Iraqi government should take steps to arrest the "PKK guerrillas" when they come down from their mountain hideouts.

- PKK members say in an interview with Le Monde in Mount Kandil that the goal of Turkey, backed by Tehran and Damascus, was to end the autonomy of northern Iraq.

- A group of Iraqi women reporters who risk their lives to cover the war are among the recipients of this year's "Courage in Journalism" awards of the International Women's Media Foundation.

WILSON